

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission
Oxford Community Center
200 Oxford Road, Oxford, MD 21654
October 2, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Chairman, Ted Bautz, Vice-Chairman, Geoff Oxnam, Scott Beatty, Peter Dunbar, Haim Loran, Walter Chase, and Paul Makosky , Mayor Willey (for Kelley Malone).

Ex Officio Members Present: Timothy Jones, Gerry O'Mara and Mike Henry

Members Excused: Kelley Malone and Debbie Renshaw

Attendees: Mayor Willey, Suzanne Skelley, Carol Abruzzese, Gordon Fronk, Cheryl Lewis, Scott Warner, Laura Heikes and Tracy Ward.

Guest Speaker: The director introduced Suzanne Skelley, Director, Cooperative Oxford Laboratory (COL), NOAA, NOS, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, to the Talbot County Economic Development Commission (EDC). Ms. Skelley provided an overview of her position as well as the operations of the Oxford Lab. The lab includes the Coast Guard, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDR), Fishery Services and NOAA, National Coastal Ocean Services. Ms. Skelley reported there are about 58 people who work at the lab with a \$3.3 million payroll. The facility has 15 structures, a pier, boat slips, boatlifts, and bids \$200 thousand in contracting and local services. Ms. Skelley reported that some suppliers were unwilling to compete for business due to a lack of registration for System for Award Management (SAM). The facilities include state of the art wet labs with saltwater feeding tanks and the ability to complete molecular and DNA studies. The lab supports the fisheries' mission for DNR, relying on science for all the allocation and management decisions. COL studies the various environmental impacts on the watershed. NOAA operations perform science to inform management decisions. Ms. Skelley works with municipalities and state agencies nationally. Ms. Skelley indicated she is very much interested in the needs of Talbot County from a science perspective. The Town of Oxford is a recipient for technical advice of risk assessment and projects for innovation. A discussion followed to identify resources to support local business in the federal and state contracting process.

Call to Order: Chairman Ted Bautz called the meeting to order, with a quorum, at 8:15 a.m.

Agenda and Minutes: The commission approved the October agenda. The EDC September draft meeting minutes were approved.

Correspondence: The director reported correspondence was received from the County Council approving Scott Beatty to the commission. The members welcomed Mr. Beatty. The Town of Oxford sent a letter to the Talbot County Office of Economic Development requesting a letter of support for an application to MD DHCD for Sustainable Community designation. The director passed the letter for the Commission to review and introduced Cheryl Lewis to report on the process. Ms. Lewis reported that the town is requesting an application for the Maryland Sustainable Community Designation. Without designation, the Town of Oxford does not have access to funding. Easton and St. Michaels are already in the program.

Old Business: The director reported a vacancy remaining on the EDC. At Mr. Makosky's request, appointment of Al Bond as Ex Officio, Arts, was recommended to the Council for their consideration. The council will consider that recommendation on October 14 and they may have other recommendations. The director presented to the Talbot County Council meeting on September 23, to provide the quarterly

update for Economic Development. Mr. Loran, Mr. O'Mara and Mr. Chase attended. The County Council requested that the EDC prepare a recommendation for the Brownfield's program monitored by the State of Maryland. A Brownfield's recommendation has been prepared and will be distributed to the EDC members for review. Once the director receives the commission's approval, she will forward the recommendation to the county manager's office. The early edition of the Comprehensive Plan is on the website for public review and input. The Planning and Zoning Commission is reviewing each of the Chapters as a final draft. Economic Development is described in Chapter 7 and edits are required for a more current and realistic presentation of the goals and initiatives. There is no mention in the Comprehensive Plan for internet interconnectivity and Broadband. The Economic Development Chapter may be where this topic is introduced as it affects infrastructure for development in our communities. Mr. Makosky offered to work with others to revise the ED chapter. Mr. Makosky suggested we prepare an inventory of available affordable housing for lower-end workers to attract high-tech business employers. Mr. Bautz agreed with Mr. Makosky calling for a sub-committee to work on the ED Chapter 7. Mr. Bautz further suggested the Strategic Plan recommendations be identified in the ED chapter for future implementation. A discussion about the Comprehensive Plan ensued; of interest were utilities, the importance of internet connectivity, looking 10 years out and the time constraint. A motion was made and approved to set up a Comprehensive Plan Sub-Committee. Mr. Oxnam, Mr. Jones, Mr. Makosky and Mr. Chase offered to work on the committee.

New Business: The director reported that the EDO was asked by the Maryland Broadband Cooperative to participate in a survey. A notice was emailed yesterday to about 300-400 companies advising them that the survey is available online. The link enables businesses to test their bandwidth and data speed, as well as analyze how they utilize their internet capabilities. If a small business or privately held business provides their sales, they can identify three priorities to determine their ROI. This is an opportunity for small businesses to learn more about the internet, and how they may create additional business, cash flow, work with social media, etc. The director reported the CORE group would be following up with the businesses to help them determine their needs. Mr. Oxnam elaborated on the role of the Maryland Broadband Cooperative and the critical impact for how we utilize the internet on the Eastern Shore.

Tracy Ward, Director, Easton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC): reported the Food Hub has requested Mistletoe Hall Farm in Easton for their location. The approval process for the lease is in progress with the Town of Easton and there will be a public hearing sometime in November. The Food Hub is seeking additional funding, \$1 million for the actual building and another several hundred thousand for programming to include food access programs. There is a 254-acre farm in Kent County that the Food Hub will take control on November 1st and farming will probably begin in February 2015, with houses to be erected over the winter. The farm manager hired for food production is Andy Anderson. Mr. Anderson has a background in education, food production, farm management, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), as well as apprenticeship programs. A two-year apprenticeship program will be created for new farmers who want to start a farm on the Eastern Shore. Acreage on the farm will be provided to the apprentices after they complete a two-year program. An advisory board has been established and their first meeting is scheduled in mid-November. The board comes from many different disciplines, to cover all issues relative to the Food Hub. Questions from the members arose regarding how the Food Hub will be financed and who will eventually take ownership: the town, county, or public investment. Ms. Ward reported that the Food Hub anticipates receiving \$1 million from the State of Maryland, and the other dollars are coming from a foundation. The Food Hub will be owned by a non-profit organization called the Eastern Shore Food Hub Corporation, and that Corporation is going to enter

into an operating agreement with an L3C that will actually manage the food hub. The L3C could hire someone directly to run the Food Hub, or explore contract options. There will be retail opportunities stemming from the Food Hub and primarily handled by a CSA. Food will be produced on Delmarva and distributed to high-population centers on the Western Shore. Ms. Ward reported that the Food Hub would have a staff person to work with food deserts and food access issues.

Business Environment Committee: Ted Bautz, Chair reported that the Business Committee and the EDC hosted the Development Forum on September 17, 2014. All the towns and county officials who are involved with the planning, permitting and inspections came together to share information on the status of their processes and matters relative to those offices, as well as changes taking place. Mr. Bautz indicated that the forum was well attended by many from the development community. He received feedback that the forum should be held annually as a way to provide a consistent status update.

Marketing Committee: Haim Loran, Chair reported there are two roles of the committee: one is to retain businesses and the other to attract businesses. The Marketing Committee has created and distributed a business climate survey to 400 businesses with almost 25% responding and the results have been collected and tabulated. Other members of the committee attempted to contact the remaining businesses, encouraging them to complete and submit the survey. The current return is almost 100 completed surveys. Mr. Loran, Mr. Klein and the director have met, and are continuing to meet with business owners who requested a business visit. The Marketing Committee has also been working on an attraction effort and has purchased 1,500 business names, from Dunn & Bradstreet, targeting material testing labs. A letter will be drafted and correspondence will be sent to the list inviting the business owners to consider Talbot County as a place for relocation. Mr. Loran expects several responses and wants to be confident there is enough manpower to respond to the requests in a timely and professional manner. Mr. Loran explained out of 1,500, if we were lucky, maybe four would move here, according to the percentages regarding this kind of endeavor. The cost of the list is \$1,500.00. The list is limited to between 1 – 100 employees. Once this mailing is underway, the committee will widen the search to medical testing labs. Material and medical testing labs would fit nicely to Talbot County.

Chairman Report: No additional report

Director's Report: The director reported the unemployment rate was 5.9% in July. The labor force is at 19,221; it has been as low as 17,000 after the 2009 recession. The EDO is working with the EEDC on a second agriculture production project and a notice was sent to the real estate community seeking sites of 100 acres that would have suitable access to infrastructure. The project will require abundant water and power. The EEDC has set arranged for a preliminary meeting with the client next week. The first agriculture production project proposal was sent to Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development (DBED), who is briefing the client on the advantages to locating in the state and in Talbot County. We should hear about their interest in the next two-three weeks. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the business commercial zoning for the Easton Annexation of Talbot Commerce Park. The County Council is working with the town to identify parcels for development and determine water and sewer requirements for growth allocation. Easton has submitted interest, on behalf of the property owners for a USDA loan to support the cost of water and sewer hook-ups and the town will be creating a tax district. The EDO arranged for the Poplar Island tour on September 11 with 23 people attending and the trip was well received. The EDO met with Johnson Logging, Peter Hanlon, Teddy Bear Fresh, Kangde Xin, Town of Oxford and Sharp Energy regarding retention and various activities. The EDO continues to monitor small business start-ups. Maryland Innovation Week was celebrated in Talbot

County on September 16 with the Maryland Startup Bus through the efforts of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneur Center. Three area entrepreneurs went inside the bus to video their pitch. The best pitches will be selected for investment opportunities. The EDO is working with Chesapeake Regional Tech Council (CRTC), hotDesks and EEDC to promote a Tech Meetup at the Tidewater Inn on October 16, from 5:30 to 7:30 as an opportunity for tech-based businesses to meet one another and learn more about the CRTC. The Eastern Shore Entrepreneur Center/hotDesk requires 1500 to 2000 sq ft. in Easton to house a hotDesk center. They have several good leads, as well as a bank who is interested in supporting the effort but have not been able to identify a location. The director will be attending a workshop, hosted by the USDA Rural Development, which is an opportunity to bring together regional economic development priorities. The Harwood Institute, out of the University of Perdue, is leading the workshop. The CORE meeting will be on October 8 at 3:00 pm at the county offices located at 215 Bay Street; the Chamber of Commerce's Economic Summit is on October 16 at the Tidewater Inn with Sage Policy Group and M&T Bank; the Chamber is also hosting a Job Fair on October 22 at the Talbot Community Center. The director will be attending the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) Fall Conference in Rocky Gap October 26 and 27 with an agenda that includes review of initiatives to support manufacturing and how Maryland may be more competitive.

Members' Reports: **Mayor Willey** had no report and was pleased to be attending for Kelley Malone, Easton representative. **Gerald O'Mara, Agriculture:** reported Dr. Stephen Alistock as the person responsible for much of the work regarding shoreline restoration and reclamation in the area. Mr. O'Mara gave an update on farm management: Farmers estimate 50% of the corn has been harvested, to date; very little soybeans have been harvested. Talbot County ranks seventh in corn production and 3rd in soy and wheat production. Talbot County reports 328 farms; the percentage of land devoted to agriculture in the county is 70%. The yields for corn is good, with a surplus of grains, so prices are low. On October 8 the University of Maryland Extension Celebrates 100th Anniversary with an open house at the Talbot County Extension Office from 3:00-6:00 pm. **Scott Beatty, Business Community:** No report. **Geoff Oxnam, Utilities, and Vice Chair:** reported they are experiencing an increase in project activity. Additionally, they are seeing a lot of growth with current internet customers looking for advanced services and upgrades. **Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford:** deferred his report to Carol Abruzzese, Oxford Commissioner, who provided a welcome on behalf of Oxford's Commissioner Fronk, Peter Dunbar and Cheryl Lewis. Ms. Abruzzese thanked the EDC for coming to Oxford and distributed the Oxford Newsletter, which Ms. Lewis produces, noting activities in Oxford. Of note was the Tall Ship, El Galeon, which docked in the Oxford Harbor in September. Ms. Abruzzese reported on the status of the upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant and their success with funding 80% of the cost through a grant. The Town of Oxford also received a grant for a dog park. Ms. Lewis is working with engineers to upgrade the boat ramp by Victor's Ice Cream. The town is working on their inventory of the infrastructure and the storm water system so they can determine how to proceed regarding the storm water management and shoreline protection fund. Tomorrow night, at 7:00 pm, a meeting is scheduled at the Oxford Firehouse concerning the 80-acre passive park. The plans will be presented and grant money has already been set aside for the park. **Walter Chase, Town of Trappe:** reported that Saturday Trappe'tober Fest begins at 11:00 am until 5:00 pm; Nace's Day Parade is on October 11th; and the Pizza Parlor, which had closed, will reopen; the Maryland State Roads Commission is utilizing one of Trappe's downtown buildings while they repave Route 50. **Tracy Ward, Director EEDC:** No additional report. **Haim Loran, Manufacturing:** No additional report. **Mike Henry, Easton Airport:** reported the airport started their construction projects: rehabilitation of the apron and obstruction removal, a total of \$2.1 million, and both contractors hired are local. With regard to Airport Day, next year they are going to need a bigger Airport! Mr. Henry thanked

Mr. Oxnam and Easton Utilities for running the advertisement. It was estimated that Airport Day had 4,000 people in attendance. The Easton Airport's non-profit partner this year was Talbot Mentors. The Oxford Museum exhibited Paul Martin's aircraft. Congressman Harris has scheduled an Aviation Outreach on October 11th at the Trident Hanger beginning at 2:00 pm for students interested in careers in aviation. **Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported the construction project of the Allied Health Building is one day ahead of schedule. There are 51 locals working on the project. The college will actually take possession of the building July 23, 2015 and hold classes the third week in August. The college is finalizing negotiations on the \$3 million contract for materials and reported they advertised twice and did not receive any local bids. A discussion ensued regarding the lack of bid responses. Mr. Jones indicated that this \$37 million project had 43 bid packages and no local bidders. The director mentioned the Small Business & Technology Center (SBTC) has a program with the state regarding procurement. Mr. Jones reported they would have a major announcement on October 30th regarding sustainability initiatives. **Paul Makosky, Member At Large:** No report. **Scott Warner, Director, Mid Shore Regional Council:** reported the Startup Pitch Bus Tour was great; Mike Thielke, the ESEC Director was thrilled with the participation by the county. In the library that same day, collaborating with Talbot Bank Shares as well as the EDO, there was 3D Manufacturing Expo that had a good turnout by both vendors and local entrepreneurs. Many people want to be members of hotDesks, once they find a space in Easton. **Cheryl Lewis, Town of Easton:** reported that to do anything with the government you must be online, you must use their online applications and you must be registered with System for Award Management (SAM). SAM is a simple registration process but it is all on computer. Contracting Centers may help. Gerald O'Mara remarked that next week, starting Tuesday through Saturday, Oxford would host the 2014 Star Class North American Championship.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Economic Development Commission Meetings are scheduled at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be November 6 at the St. Michaels' Town Office, Edgar M. Bosley, Jr. Municipal Building, 300 Mill Street, St. Michaels, MD 21663.

National Census of Agriculture: www.nass.usda.gov

Strategic Networks Group/Questionnaire: www.sngroup.com/Maryland

Maryland Broadband Map: <http://mdbroadbandmap.org>

Veterans Employment and Training Service: www.dol.gov/vets/vets-100.html

The Maryland Workforce Exchange and labor market information are available online at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.